

**Remarks:**

These remarks are responsive to the Office action dated September 22, 2005. Claims 1-27 remain pending in the application. Claims 10-17 and 22-27 have been allowed. Claims 1-9 and 18-21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) based on Gecht et al. (US 6,859,832). In view of the remarks below, applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the application under 37 C.F.R. §1.111 and allowance of all pending claims.

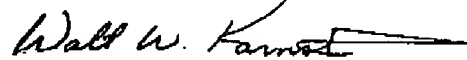
As indicated, claims 1-9 and 18-21 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) based on Gecht et al. Applicants note, however, that Gecht et al. did not issue until February 22, 2005 (after Applicants' August 27, 2001 filing date), and that Gecht et al. has an effective date of October 16, 2000 (a date after Applicants' invention). Applicants thus are submitting a Declaration Under 37 C.F.R. §1.131, including an Invention Disclosure prepared prior to the October 16, 2000 effective date of Gecht et al. The Declaration demonstrates applicants' invention of the claimed subject matter prior to Gecht et al.

In view of the Declaration Under 37 C.F.R. §1.131, applicants submit that Gecht et al. is not available as prior art, and that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) based on Gecht et al. should be withdrawn.

Applicants believe that this application is now in condition for allowance, in view of the included Declaration Under 37 C.F.R. §1.131 and the above remarks. Accordingly, applicants respectfully request that the Examiner issue a Notice of Allowability covering the pending claims. If the Examiner has any questions, or if a telephone interview would in any way advance prosecution of the application, please contact the undersigned attorney of record.

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being facsimile transmitted to Examiner T. Lamb, Group Art Unit 2622, Assistant Commissioner for Patents, at facsimile number (571) 273-8300 on December 22, 2005.



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Christie A. Doolittle

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